

# Racial Identity Attitudes and Academic Achievement Among At-Risk Black Female Adolescents

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**Abstract:** *Racial identity attitudes, a construct proposed as a measure of the world view of Blacks (Cross & Vandiver, 2001), and academic performance of a group of Black females attending a high-poverty, failing high school with a 42% graduation rate were examined. These young women were either pregnant or parenting and attended a parenting support group at their school. Findings revealed that racial identity attitude scores generally were low for participants. In addition, two subscale scores were significantly related to school absence and academic performance. Significant relationships were also found among subscale scores. Findings are discussed in relation to future research and practice in the areas of racial identity attitudes and pregnancy prevention and parenting support programs for at-risk Black female youth.*

## Introduction

For the first time since 1991, the teenage birthrate in the U.S. rose during 2006, with the largest rate increase (5%; 63.7 births per 1,000 population) for Black females ages 15 to 19 years (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2007). During the same time, the highest rate of low-weight births and infant deaths occurred among Black women (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008). Although Hispanic teens have a higher birthrate, Black teens have the highest pregnancy rate (134 per 1,000 population) (Hamilton et al., 2007). Black teens also are more likely to have engaged in sexual activity before age 13 and to be sexually active than are either White or Hispanic teens (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008). They also are estimated to have the highest rate of unintended births (80%) (Afable-Munsuz, Speizer, Magnus, & Kendall, 2006).

Early, high-risk sexual activity; teenage pregnancy; and teen parenting present considerable challenges to a young, single woman. Outcomes associated with these behaviors include poor academic performance, high school dropout, limited postsecondary education and career options, and diminished earnings (Baytop, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). Children born to teen parents are more likely to experience birth complications and to be preterm and of low birthweight, placing them at risk for illness, death, and developmental delays (Thomas & Dimitrov, 2007). In addition, teen mothers are more likely to experience higher levels of stress, depression, feelings of failure and helplessness, and physical health complications than are older mothers (Meschke & Bartholomae, 1998).

Factors associated with teen pregnancy include socioeconomic status, parental level of education, neighborhood and school characteristics, academic

performance, substance use, peer pressure, social influences, race, ethnicity, and family composition and dynamics (Kalmuss, Davidson, Cohall, Laraque, & Cassell, 2003). Pregnancy prevention programs generally have focused on primary or secondary prevention, such as delaying sexual activity and increasing use of contraceptives among sexually active teens, although effects have been equivocal (Baytop, 2006). In addition, teens' attitudes have been examined as factors that contribute to or delay sexual activity and pregnancy (Meschke & Bartholomae, 1998; Thomas & Dimitrov, 2007). For example, Afable-Munsuz et al. (2006) suggested that having a Positive Orientation Toward Early Motherhood (POEM) by associating pregnancy with increased responsibility, intimacy, attention, and acceptance encourages unprotected sexual activity among young women. Researchers have recommended including values clarification, self-efficacy enhancement, goal setting, and decision making in pregnancy prevention curricula, although limited effectiveness data exist (Kalmuss et al., 2003; Thomas & Dimitrov, 2007). In addition, to address the poor academic performance typical of pregnant or parenting teens, academic support has been incorporated into teen parenting programs; however, program effects have been similarly minimal (Baytop, 2006).

The relation between Black racial identity attitudes and a range of educational, social, and psychological outcomes have been studied extensively (Awad, 2007; Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007; Jones, Cross, & DeFour, 2007; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002; Worrell, 2008). However, no researchers have studied specifically the interaction of the psychological outcome of Black racial identity and pregnancy in Black teens. Racial identity

attitudes is a construct proposed by Cross and Vandiver (2001) and colleagues to describe frameworks by which Blacks view the world. The concept of racial identity attitudes is derived from Cross and colleagues' expanded Nigrescence model of the psychology of Black identity, which consists of three multidimensional frames of reference by which the world is viewed (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The first frame (Pre-Encounter) describes Blacks prior to encountering the effects of race and racism and comprises three different attitudes: assimilating White culture (Assimilation), adopting negative views of Blacks (Miseducation), and racial self-hatred (Self-Hatred). The next frame (Immersion-Emersion Anti-White) suggests a confrontation that propels the awareness that race and racism play a critical role in American society, prompting an anti-White attitude. The third frame (Internalization) is composed of two attitudes: Afrocentricity (immersion in Black culture) and Multiculturalist (connecting with multiple cultures and groups). The progression through the gamut of racial identity attitudes is viewed as individualistic rather than linear, recognizing that Blacks represent economic, social, and ethnic diversity (Jones et al., 2007).

Racial identity attitudes, particularly Internalization views, have been associated with positive outcomes for Blacks with respect to academic achievement, self-esteem, mental health, developing trust, and refraining from high-risk behaviors, although findings have been mixed (Awad, 2007; Jones et al., 2007; Lockett & Harrell, 2003; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007). Internalization attitudes may also serve as a protective factor against racial discrimination and stereotype threat (Davis et al., 2006; Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007; Jones et al., 2007; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). However, despite the potential of racial identity attitudes to influence outcomes positively among Blacks, few investigations of racial identity have been conducted in high schools, particularly in high-poverty, under-resourced high schools attended predominately by Blacks (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Smalls et al., 2007). In addition, no published study was found in which the relation of academic performance and racial identification was examined among Black adolescent females at risk for school failure due to pregnancy or parenting, poverty, attendance at a failing school, and low academic achievement. Finally, although racial identity attitudes have been associated with decreased engagement in high-risk behaviors, a focus on racial identity has not been incorporated into pregnancy prevention programs, despite the high incidence of sexual activity and unintended pregnancies reported among Black teens. However, it may be that changes in racial identity attitudes, such as more developed Internalization views, relate to delaying sexual activity and future pregnancies and improving academic performance among young Black women who are pregnant or parenting.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to extend the literature by examining the relation between racial identity attitudes, academic performance, and school attendance among a group of at-risk Black adolescent females. These students attended a high-poverty, predominately Black high school identified as failing by federal and state standards. In addition, these young women were either pregnant or parenting and attended a teen parent support group at their school. The goal was to identify factors that may have accounted for differential academic outcomes among these students and the role played by racial identity attitudes in influencing these outcomes.

## Method Setting

Participants attended a comprehensive high school offering a range of academic and career preparation courses that was located in a large metropolitan school district in the southeastern U.S. The school enrolled 1,270 students, of which 78% were Black, 19% White, and 3% other ethnicities (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, Native American). On-time graduation rate was 42%, and 95% of students received free or reduced lunches. The school was identified as "needing improvement" based on No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards with respect to graduation rates and test scores. Eighty percent of residents in the students' neighborhood were Black, 40% of adults were unemployed, and 44% of families lived below the poverty level, typically in a household headed by a single female who was receiving or previously had received public assistance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

## Parenting Support Program

The school provided a parenting support program targeting retention of female students who were pregnant or parenting. This program was funded and staffed through a neighborhood health agency and was designed to provide low-income, academically at-risk youth with educational and health assistance to decrease their likelihood of future pregnancies and of exiting school early. Services were provided through an in-school health clinic and crisis intervention center. One-hour classes were offered twice weekly to program participants by a staff social worker using a curriculum composed of lessons clustered into three broad units: (a) exploring self-concept and perceiving oneself as a unique individual; (b) addressing peer pressure, sexual health, and healthy relationships; and (c) developing skills in assertiveness, interpersonal communication, and money management. Although 42 students were listed on the class roster, typically only 25 to 30 students were present for class meetings. Participants who missed more than three meetings per month were evaluated based on teacher input and grades to determine retention in the program. This attendance policy did not apply during a student's final trimester of pregnancy during which school policy allowed students to have homebound instruction. Students were referred to the program by a teacher, health clinic staff, parent, or self-referral. A graduate student in special education from a local university served as a teaching assistant during one class period per week.

## Participants

Of the 42 females enrolled in the program, 27 participated in the study. Because the goal was to measure Black racial identity attitudes, only Black students were selected to participate. Fifteen students on the program's roster were excluded because they either (a) were not Black, or (b) never attended class during the length of the study. Written consent was obtained from all participating students and a parent or guardian (minor students). Participants' mean age was 17.5 years (range = 15 to 19) and almost half were in the ninth grade. Only two students reported being employed. Over half ( $n = 15$ ) were parents; of these, five were also pregnant. Twelve students were not yet parents but were pregnant. Seven students were on homebound instruction (in their third trimester); five of these students were already parents. All but six students lived with a single mother or grandparent as family head of household. Family income of over two-thirds of students

was less than \$20,000 annually and over one-half of families received state-funded health care and/or aid to children. Additional participant information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Information

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Age		
15	3	11
16	7	26
17	6	22
18	10	37
19	1	4
Grade		
9	11	40
10	5	19
11	5	19
12	6	22
Current Employment Status		
Employed	2	7
Not Employed	25	93
Parenting Status		
Participants With Children (Pregnant)	5	19
Participants With Children (Not Pregnant)	10	37
Participants Without Children (Pregnant)	12	44
Homebound Participants <sup>a</sup>	7	16
Family Head of Household		
Mother Only	14	51
Grandparent	7	26
Two Parents	5	19
Father of Participant's Child	1	4
Yearly Household Income		
< \$10,000	9	33
\$10,000 - \$20,000	10	37
> \$20,000 - \$30,000	5	19
> \$30,000	1	4
Not Reported	2	7
Government Assistance Received by Family <sup>b</sup>		
State Medicare	14	51
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	14	51
Food Stamps	11	41
Public Assistance	8	30

<sup>a</sup>Homebound participants were in their third trimester of pregnancy.

<sup>b</sup>More than one response was possible.

Measures

*Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS).* The CRIS (Vandiver et al., 2002) was used to measure participants' racial identity stages based on Cross and Vandiver's (2001) Nigrescence model. The 40-item questionnaire comprises six subscales using a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, and 7 = Strongly agree. The Pre-Encounter Assimilation subscale measures pro-American, assimilationist attitudes (e.g., "I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of a racial group"). The Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale assesses acceptance of negative stereotypes about Blacks (e.g., "Many African Americans are too lazy to see opportunities that are right in front of them"). The Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale measures racial self-hatred (e.g., "Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black"). The Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscale measures hatred toward Whites and White society (e.g., "I hate the White community and all that it represents"). The Internalization Afrocentricity subscale measures awareness of Black culture and Black empowerment (e.g., "Black people will never be free until we embrace an Afrocentric perspective"). The Internalization Multiculturalist subscale assesses acceptance of and connection with diverse cultures (e.g., "I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups [Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.]"). The CRIS demonstrated adequate reliability with alpha values of .76 to .89 (Vandiver et al., 2002). Convergent validity was demonstrated with significant correlations with the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Jones et al., 2007). Internal consistency of the CRIS with the current sample was established as .68 overall. *Record reviews.* Students' school records were examined to identify course enrollment, grade point averages (GPAs), and school attendance for the first four six-week grading periods of the academic year in which the study occurred (N = 116 days). Family demographic information (e.g., household income, government assistance received, head of household) was obtained from intake information of the participating health agency.

Data Collection Procedures

The teaching assistant (a Black female) established rapport with participants throughout one semester in which she helped facilitate the parenting support program curriculum. After obtaining written consent for participation (students could opt out, although none did), the teaching assistant then distributed the CRIS to students at the beginning of one class period. First, the assistant read aloud from a written script the purpose of the survey, procedures for answering questions, and methods for ensuring confidentiality. Students were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that their responses would not affect their treatment or evaluation in class. Students were asked to sit apart and raise their hands if clarification was needed on a question. Next, the assistant verbally read each question on the survey form, waited for students to respond in writing, and provided clarification when asked.



## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' demographic information. Means, standard deviations, and ranges were found for students' GPAs, school absences, and subscale scores on the CRIS. Summary data were analyzed to identify trends in relation to parenting and homebound status of students. In addition, independent sample t-tests were conducted to identify significant differences in CRIS scores due to parenting status. Finally, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relation among study variables.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and ranges of students' GPAs, absences, and CRIS subscale scores. The mean GPA for participants was low (1.95, range = 0 to 3.80), where 0 = F, 2 = C, and 4 = A. Nine students had less than a C average; of these, six were on homebound status or had a child, and three did not. Ten students had averages in the C range of whom six had a child or were homebound, and four were not. Eight students had a B or better average; five of these had a child or were homebound, and three were not. Although GPA's generally were low, being a parent or being homebound did not appear to relate to poor grades.

Average school absence was high ( $M = 22$  days absent of 116 possible days present, range = 1 to 66). Absences across students tended to be bimodal: 14 students were absent 10% or less of possible days present ( $n \leq 12$  days); 10 students were absent 25% or more of possible days ( $n \geq 30$  days). Of the 14 students with comparatively fewer absences, 7 were on homebound status or had a child, whereas 7 did not. (Homebound students who completed assignments and reported daily to their teachers were counted as present.) Of the 10 with greater absences, 8 were either homebound or had a child and only 2 did not. In addition, nine participants were a year overage for their grade and seven were two or more years overage. Of the seven, five either had a child or were homebound. Therefore, high absences did not appear to be associated with parenting or homebound status while being overage and under-credited did.

Mean CRIS subscale scores were fairly low (range = 2.81 to 3.97 on a scale of 1 to 7), generally indicating disagreement or neutrality toward statements. Although students used the entire scale in responding, scores generally clustered around subscale means, as indicated by modest standard deviations. The Internalization Multiculturalist subscale had the highest mean (3.97), although 22 responses fell between "disagreeing" or "neither agreeing or disagreeing" with statements like "I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.)." Only five students had mean subscale scores indicating "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" with such statements. The Pre-encounter Assimilation subscale ranked closely behind ( $M = 3.91$ ), indicating general disagreement or neutral feelings with statements like "If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be 'American,' and not African American." Mean scores of only 3 students indicated "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" with similar statements; 10 students' mean scores fell in the range of "strongly disagreeing" or "disagreeing." The mean score (3.84) for the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale ranked next. Nine students' mean scores showed "strong disagreement" or "disagreement" with statements like "Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work." Eleven students' scores showed "some disagreement" or neutral feelings. Only seven students' mean scores showed any level of agreement with similar statements. These findings indicate that although students did not hold strong multicultural views, they also did not strongly subscribe to negative stereotypes about Blacks.

Ranking next was the Internalization Afrocentricity subscale ( $M = 3.53$ ). Only two students' mean scores showed "somewhat agreeing" with statements like "I believe that only those Black people who accept an Afrocentric perspective can truly solve the race problem in America." Mean scores of 16 students fell in the range of "somewhat disagreeing" or feeling neutral, while the 9 remaining students' scores indicated "strongly disagreeing" or "disagreeing." Similarly, the next ranking mean (2.94) showed general disagreement with Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred subscale statements. Mean scores of 17 students indicated "strong disagreement" or "disagreement" with statements like "When I look in the mirror at my Black image, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see" and only 5 students' mean scores showed any level of agreement. The lowest mean score was for the Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscale (2.81), suggesting that students generally did not hold a strong dislike of Whites or

Table 2

#### Descriptive Analysis of Student Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
GPA	1.95	1.21	0-3.80
Absence	22.30	21.31	1-66
CRIS Subscale			
Pre-Encounter Assimilation	3.91	1.41	2.20-6.40
Pre-Encounter Miseducation	3.84	1.23	2.00-6.20
Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred	2.94	1.67	1.00-6.00
Immersion-Emersion Anti-White	2.81	1.64	1.00-6.60
Internalization Afrocentricity	3.53	1.18	1.00-5.80
Internalization Multiculturalist	3.97	1.21	1.00-.700

*Note.* Grade point average (GPA) was measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 4.0. Absences were calculated based on a total of 116 possible days. CRIS subscale scores were measured on a scale where 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *somewhat agree*, 6 = *agree*, and 7 = *strongly agree*.

White culture. Specifically, 16 of 27 students' mean scores for this subscale fell in the range of "strongly disagreeing" or "disagreeing" with statements like "I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people" as compared to only five students' mean scores indicating any level of agreement. Findings show that students generally disagreed with negative views toward Whites or themselves as Black and that they did not hold strong Afrocentric views. Finally, a series of independent samples t-tests indicated no significant differences in CRIS subscale mean scores related to students either being a parent or on homebound status.

Correlational Analysis

Table 3 shows results for the Pearson correlation analysis for the variables GPA, absence, and CRIS subscale scores.

*GPA and absence.* A Pearson correlation coefficient of  $-.73$  ( $p < .01$ ) was found between students' GPAs and absences, indicating that students with higher GPAs had fewer absences. For example, 9 students had a GPA of D or F ( $< 2.0$ ); their mean absence rate was 41 (of 116 days). Eight students had a GPA of B (3.0 or better); these students had a mean absence rate of only eight days. Not surprisingly, having higher grades related to attending school more frequently. CRIS subscales and GPA. A moderate but significant negative relationship ( $r = -.50$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was found between the Pre-Encounter Miseducation subscale score and GPA. The greater the degree to which students agreed with negative stereotypes of Blacks, such as laziness or affiliation with crime, the lower their GPAs tended to be. For example, 7 students had a mean Miseducation subscale score of 5 or greater

indicating "somewhat" to "strong" agreement with negative Black stereotypes. These students had a mean GPA of 1.00. Nine students had mean scores of 3 or less indicating that they "somewhat" to "strongly disagreed" with such stereotypes. Their mean GPAs fell in the C range (2.33), which was above the mean of 1.95 for all participants.

The Immersion-Emersion Anti-White subscale score also was moderately but significantly negatively correlated with GPA ( $r = -.43$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The more students endorsed anti-White attitudes, such as hating Whites and White society, the lower their GPAs tended to be. The five students with mean scores of 5 or greater, indicating agreement with anti-White statements, had a mean GPA of 1.26 (D). Seventeen students had mean scores of 3 or less indicating disagreement; their mean GPA was in the C range (2.38). Therefore, holding negative views toward both Blacks and Whites related to lowered academic performance for students for students who were pregnant or parenting.

*CRIS subscales and absence.* The same two CRIS subscales, Pre-Encounter Miseducation ( $r = .68$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Immersion-Emersion Anti-White ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .05$ ), had a significant relationship to absence, however, in a positive direction. Higher absences were positively related to higher scores on these subscales. To illustrate, the 7 students with Miseducation scores of 5 or greater (i.e., agreeing with negative stereotypes of Blacks) had a mean absence rate of 44 (of 116) days. The 9 students with scores of 3 or less had a mean absence rate of 11 days. Similarly, the 5 students with mean scores of 5 or greater on the Anti-White subscale had a mean of absence rate of 38 days; the 17 students with mean scores of 3 or less had a

Table 3  
*Correlation Coefficients for GPA, Absence, and Racial Identity Subscales*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. GPA	--							
2. Absence	$-.73^{**}$	--						
3. Pre-Encounter Assimilation	.25	$-.22$	--					
4. Pre-Encounter Miseducation	$-.50^{**}$	$.68^{**}$	$-.32$	--				
5. Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred	$-.36$	.27	$-.23$	.04	--			
6. Immersion-Emersion Anti-White	$-.43^{*}$	$.42^{*}$	$-.14$	.15	$.63^{**}$	--		
7. Internalization Afrocentricity	.14	$-.02$	.05	$-.32$	.20	.20	--	
8. Internalization Multiculturalist	.37	$-.18$	.34	$-.07$	$-.34$	$-.40^{*}$	$-.12$	--

Note.  $^{*} p < .05$ .  $^{**} p < .01$ .

mean absence rate of 18 days. Therefore, for Black teens who were pregnant or parenting, subscribing to negative stereotypes of Blacks and Whites correlated with missing school more frequently.

**CRIS subscale intercorrelations.** Two significant correlational relationships were found among mean CRIS subscale scores. Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (e.g., "I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black") was positively related to Immersion-Emersion Anti-White attitudes ( $r = .63, p < .01$ ). In addition, holding Anti-White attitudes was negatively related to endorsing Internalization Multiculturalist attitudes, such as feeling connected to individuals from different cultural backgrounds or sexual orientations ( $r = -.40, p < .05$ ). Findings show that if students tended to feel self-hatred because of being Black, they were more likely to hold negative views toward Whites. Feeling connected to different cultures and groups, however, related to students having more positive attitudes toward Whites.

## Discussion

The racial identity attitudes of a group of Black females attending a high-poverty, failing high school with a 42 % graduation rate were examined. These young women were either pregnant, parenting, or both; attended a parenting support group at their school; and all but six lived with a single parent or grandparent. As a group, their academic performance was lower than the school average where 65 % of grades were a C or better. Average GPA for participants was below a C; however, individual student records suggested that having a child or being homebound (third trimester of pregnancy) did not relate to lower GPAs except for students at the bottom of the grade scale. Participant absences generally were high but only related to parenting or being homebound for those with the most excessive absences, as did being overage for grade. Not surprisingly, absences and GPA were found to be negatively correlated for these students; racial identity attitudes also related to school performance. Based on our findings, implications for Black adolescent development, racial identity attitudes, and pregnancy prevention programs will be discussed.

Participants in our study represent a unique population among investigations of racial identity attitudes. Rarely have high school students been included in these studies, particularly students attending impoverished, failing, segregated schools (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Smalls et al., 2007). Because Blacks are overrepresented in separate and under-resourced schools in the U.S. (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004), it is critical to examine the outlook and beliefs of youth attending these schools, including their racial identity attitudes (Irving & Hudley, 2005). This study investigated the racial identity attitudes of pregnant or parenting females with generally low academic performance who attended a marginalized, racially segregated school. No published study has been found addressing racial identity with this population. These students exemplify an extremely vulnerable population faced with the challenges of young, single motherhood compounded with poverty, segregation, and limited educational experiences and resources. In addition, these young women were confronted with the stigma typically associated with teen pregnancy and parenting, as well as the prevailing racist attitudes and practices that exist nationally and, in particular, in southeastern U.S. (Holthouse,

2009). Because racial identity attitudes can affect student outcomes such as academic performance, it is important to examine their effects among previously unexamined populations, as in our investigation.

Findings revealed that CRIS subscale scores, used to measure racial identity attitudes, generally were low for our participants, with all means below 4 on a scale of 1 to 7. As a group, participants overwhelmingly rejected anti-White or Black self-hatred views and disagreed with or were ambivalent toward an Afrocentric perspective as well as stereotyped negative attitudes toward Blacks. In addition, they were not inclined to give up their Black identity in favor of an assimilatory American identity or a more multicultural perspective. Two subscale scores (Pre-Encounter Miseducation and Immersion-Emersion Anti-White) were significantly related to absence and GPA. Specifically, students who subscribed to negative stereotypes of Blacks and anti-White views tended to have extremely low GPAs and excessive absences. Conversely, holding more positive views toward both Blacks and Whites was associated with higher grades and fewer absences. In addition, several subscale scores were significantly related. Black self-hatred attitudes were positively related to anti-White views, whereas anti-White views were negatively correlated with feelings of multicultural connectedness.

Although findings have been mixed, previous researchers reported that higher anti-White scores on the CRIS racial identity assessment related to lower academic performance, whereas multicultural views were positively related to academic performance and acted as a buffer against racism (Awad, 2007; Jones et al., 2007; Worrell, 2008). In general, these studies reported subscale scores that differed substantially from our findings. For example, mean CRIS Multiculturalist subscale scores reported by Awad, Jones, Worrell, and colleagues were between 4.72 and 5.64 as compared to our mean of 3.97. Mean Anti-White subscale scores were lower in these studies (1.68 to 2.78) than in ours (2.81). However, participants in these studies were either college students or adolescents from middle class backgrounds attending integrated, high performing public schools. In contrast, participants in our study attended a school that was overwhelmingly Black, low-income, and failing. Their neighborhood was similarly segregated, lacking in resources, and plagued by unemployment. In addition, participants were further marginalized by their pregnant or parenting status.

Our participants' racial identity attitudes may have been influenced by their cloistered, racially segregated, and under-resourced school and neighborhood environments. Lack of exposure to racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity could have prevented students in our study from developing more multicultural views. Multicultural racial identity attitudes have been associated with (a) helping Blacks feel connected to and accepting of people of other races, religions, ethnicities, or sexual orientations; (b) increasing Blacks' self-esteem; (c) providing protection from the effects of racial incidents or practices; and (d) decreasing involvement in high-risk behaviors (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007; Jones et al., 2007; Smalls et al., 2007; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). Not only were our participants likely hampered by school and neighborhood shortcomings, but, in addition, their segregated environments may have influenced some students to hold anti-White, culturally narrow views that hindered their academic performance and social and personal adjustment. Further,

their segregated, impoverished environments may have prevented some participants from questioning negative stereotypes of Blacks (e.g., lazy, unemployed, criminally involved)—a view found in this study to relate to poor academic performance and excessive absence.

Research has demonstrated empirically the benefits of attending racially-balanced schools, especially for Blacks (Booker, 2007; Lee, 2007; Williams & Land, 2006). For example, Lee's data corroborate findings of previous studies on the effects of school racial composition indicating that Blacks do better academically at schools with a larger proportion of Whites. It may be that racial segregation in itself presents a disabling condition by limiting the development of a broader, more multicultural attitude associated with higher academic performance and protection from discrimination, racism, and racial stereotypes (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007; Williams & Land, 2006). In addition, Blacks attending impoverished, segregated schools who are receiving an inferior education may not connect academic success with future career success because of limited exemplars (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008). Further, participants in our study experienced the double jeopardy of attending such a school and facing the challenges of pregnancy and parenting while generally being near the bottom of the school ladder academically. Participants may have been affected by the stigma of teen pregnancy, as viewed by the dominant White culture of the U.S., and, therefore, felt even more socially isolated within their largely segregated school and neighborhood setting, in addition to the isolation experienced by any young mother with limited resources and supports.

### Future Research and Practice

Findings suggest ideas for future research and practice. Teens in this study attended a parenting support program designed to prevent future pregnancies and keep students in school. Attitude has been suggested as a factor in decreasing early sexual activity and unintended pregnancies among teens and improving academic performance (Afable-Munsuz et al., 2006; Thomas & Dimitrov, 2007). Although self-identity and self-esteem were addressed as a component of the program attended by participants, racial identity attitudes were not. However, racial identity attitudes, particularly multiculturalist views, have been reported to increase Blacks' self-esteem, confidence, coping skills, and academic performance while decreasing high-risk behaviors (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). A more developed multicultural racial identity attitude may have helped participants acquire the skills to refrain from unsafe or unwanted sex and prevent future pregnancies by raising their self-confidence, sense of self-efficacy, and social awareness. Similarly, their academic performance may have improved. To date, pregnancy prevention programs have had limited effect on teens' sexual or academic behavior (Baytop, 2006; Franklin, Grant, Corcoran, Miller, & Bultman, 1997). Future pregnancy prevention and teen parenting programs should evaluate the effect of racial identity development as a treatment component.

Although mean academic performance was low among participants, individual differences in performance were found that related to racial identity attitudes, such as participants' views toward Blacks and Whites. However, it is not known if other factors may have accounted for differences in students' attitudes and performance. For example, family support, personal characteristics, family economic

status, or teacher support may have influenced participants' school performance and attendance. Future researchers should include multiple contextual factors in their investigations of racial identity attitudes among similar populations and settings.

### Limitations

Several limitations to the study warrant further attention. First, our participant sample was small ( $N = 27$ ) and represented only one high school in one metropolitan area in the Southeast. The study should be replicated with a larger, national sample. Second, the voice of participants was not included. Future studies should corroborate quantitative data with participants' own views on racial identity, pregnancy, and parenting as gathered through open-ended interviews. Third, a comparison group was not included. It may have been revealing to compare findings for teens in this study to those of young women in the same school who were not pregnant or parenting.

### Conclusion

Black teenage females who are pregnant or parenting and attending high-poverty, segregated, failing high schools have many challenges to face in maintaining favorable academic performance and school attendance. To stay enrolled in school while fulfilling their responsibilities as young mothers, these students require considerable support, including affordable daycare, flexible class schedules, and acceptance by and assistance from family and friends. Although many factors are associated with successful outcomes for these young women, racial identity attitudes were shown in this study to relate to higher grades and lower rates of school absence. Promoting students' racial awareness within a multicultural worldview as a component of teen parenting programs has potential to increase these students' likelihood of successful, postsecondary, adult outcomes.

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